

Housing

Affordable housing is fast becoming the leading issue for our entire state. The longer it takes to bring true solutions, the more these problems continue to spiral. This issue goes beyond the homeless, but extends to providing workforce housing – both rental and ownership – for everyone from police, nurses, teachers, and worker in our visitor industry. Recognizing that the City must play a role, along with State and Federal government agencies and private industry, my goal is to identify and help implement the role that the City must play in this issue.

In the late 1990's, the City eliminated its housing department and moved away from developing housing. While many agree that private entities specializing in affordable housing, and not the government, should be developing housing, the City must encourage affordable housing development through incentives and, where necessary, requirements on future developments.

Earlier this year, to demonstrate the City's on-going commitment to affordable housing initiatives, I introduced Resolution 05-154. Resolution 05-154, CD 1, adopted on June 6, 2005, seeks to have DPP amend the City's affordable Housing and Unilateral Agreement rules to include an "in-lieu" fee alternative for developments. This amendment will enable to developers to meet the City's housing mandate through financial contributions towards eligible housing projects. Specifically, housing developments operated by non-profit organizations. This option will allow non-profit housing developments to receive the financing necessary to get these projects completed and make housing available to our residents sooner.

Growth

West Oahu is designated as Oahu's growth region. That being true, as a district we should be prepared for changes to occur and growth to happen. However, this growth must take place in a responsible and sensible manner. Growth should be anchored by critical infrastructure and commercial development that brings new economies into the district. Above all, the City must work with developers to insure that growth brings success to West Oahu.

I will continue to push the position that government, both City and State, must be willing to spending additional moneys in West Oahu so that we may develop the region in a responsible manner. This means a focus and priority on everything from road and sewer, to police and fire service, to government services and incentives.

This brings about a very important and difficult policy issue of determining how fast growth can occur – balancing the need to insure that the infrastructure exists against the need to continue to provide a supply of new housing opportunities for our residents. Going to either extreme is not an option – uncontrolled growth without infrastructure will destroy our life styles, while a complete stop to development will cause a greater spike in the housing market, making living in Hawaii unattainable for our children.

The solution lies in a balance of these factors. How the City deals with this over the near term future will have long lasting effects.